

When Summer Kisses Fall: Enjoying the Harvest from Field and Vine

Written by Nancy Rosetti

Thursday, 10 September 2009 08:03



To borrow a phrase from the New York Culinary Institute: "Forgive us if we celebrate the end of summer." Sure, the bounty from the farm shines in the warmer weather; asparagus, berries, and delicate greens abound. But late summer brings its own windfall. This is really when the summer yield reaches its peak.

In the Quad Cities, there is a [farmers' market](#) nearly every day of the week, and you will find grocery stores bringing more seasonal, locally grown food into their produce sections. Taking advantage of the abundance of the harvest is a must. The following are seasonal food and beverage suggestions -- starting with the wine.

White

White is often the go-to wine for the warmer weather, but I know more than a few folks who, as soon as that thermometer dips below 70 degrees, shelve the stuff until May. A good way to keep drinking whites is to gently transition your summer fare to your fall fare.

Take classic *coq au vin* -- a French dish traditionally made by marinating chicken in lots of French Burgundy or Pinot Noir. Typically thought of as a cold-weather dish, it is a great way to incorporate sweet yellow onions, carrots, mushrooms, and fresh herbs such as parsley.

The chicken is dusted with flour and browned in a pan, placed in a large casserole or Dutch oven, and surrounded by your favorite vegetables, a garlic clove, and some fresh herbs. To help this dish reflect the still-not-quite-cold weather, replace the red wine with white for the marinade. Reislings from Alsace can be very reasonably priced (between \$10 and \$20 a bottle), which is helpful because the marinade can require one to two bottles depending on the quantity of chicken you are preparing. Pour the wine and some chicken broth to cover and cook in a 350-degree oven for about an hour.

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Be sure to save a bottle to drink with your clever new meal. And, because it can take a while to prepare this properly, be sure to enjoy a glass at the stove. Try Zind-Humbrecht Pinot D'Alsace from Alsace, France. It is medium-bodied and dry, with crisp aromas of unripe apricot skin and white peaches.

Rosé

Rosé wines are often forgotten. To be clear, a rosé is not a blend of white and red wines. True rosé wines are made by pressing red grapes and separating the must (juice pressed from grapes before it has fermented) from the skins soon after this process.

Rosé wines offer great opportunities for matching with food. They are crisp but not as acidic as many whites, and they are smooth but not as tannic as red wine. They are perfect when a white wine is not enough and a red wine is too much. Rosé pairs nicely with roasted chicken, eggplant, and new potatoes with a hint of garlic.

Pick up a pile of heirloom tomatoes and make a soup by blending the tomatoes with a bit of jalapeño, some cucumber, a dash of red-wine vinegar, salt, and pepper. Strain the purée through a fine-meshed sieve and top with a few minced olives. With a bottle of Château Pesquie Les Terrasses, *voilà!* You are in Provence!

Red

Most likely, your grill hasn't had its final cleaning and covering. You really can't go wrong with grilled red meat and a big, full-bodied red, but some California Cabernets are designed to be so big, so fruit-forward, that they can overpower your meal.

Experiment with an Italian blend. We recommend Lamborghini "Trescone" from Umbria. It is a blend of Sangiovese, Cilieggiolo, and Merlot. All it really needs is your favorite cut of steak or a burger, a pot of sweet corn (you'll miss it in the winter), and some crusty bread.

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If you prefer California reds, consider Peterson Dry Creek Zinfandel. Fred Peterson, the vintner, "hopes that it reflects the overall Dry Creek Valley terroir. The intense blackberry aromas blend with subtle black pepper and a touch of earthiness." It is food-friendly and full-bodied.

Speaking of full-bodied, try Kinton Syrah with barbecued short ribs and coleslaw made with both green and red cabbage. The winery is located in Santa Barbara County, an area known for its Syrah.

If meat is not your thing, take heart! There is still red-wine and grilling pleasure to be had! One of our favorite ways to use the sacks full of zucchini, squash, peppers, and eggplant that come our way is to slice them lengthwise, toss them in olive oil, and grill them. Meanwhile, brown some breadcrumbs in a pan (cast iron works best) with olive oil, crushed red pepper, and garlic. Finely mince a collection of your favorite fresh herbs and toss them with a little sherry or red-wine vinegar. When the vegetables are done, transfer them to a platter and sprinkle the herb vinegar and breadcrumbs over the top. Evodia, Garnacha from the de Origen Calatayud in Aragon, Spain, has bright fruit flavors, a bit of spiciness, and little to no tannin. We had a glass (okay, a bottle) with this very dish recently, along with a little Spanish cheese and bread. Delicious!

Nancy Rosetti is co-owner of the Faithful Pilot Café & Spirits and the online wine store [Rosetti WineShop.com](http://RosettiWineShop.com)

. The restaurant (117 North Cody Road in LeClaire) is hosting its annual Harvest Wine Dinner, featuring local producers, on Thursday, September 17, at 6:30 p.m. For more information, visit FaithfulPilotCafe.com or call (563)289-4156.